

Nietzsche as ‘Europe’s Buddha’ and ‘Asia’s Superman’

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Published online: 26 September 2008
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Abstract Nietzsche represents in an interesting way the well-worn Western approach to Asian philosophical and religious thinking: initial excitement, then neglect by appropriation, and swift rejection when found to be incompatible with one’s own tradition, whose roots are inexorably traced back to the ‘ancient’ Greeks. Yet, Nietzsche’s philosophical critique and methods - such as ‘perspectivism’ - offer an instructive route through which to better understand another tradition even if the sole purpose of this exercise is to perceive one’s own limitations through the eyes of the other: a self-*destruktion* of sorts. To help correct this shortcoming and begin the long overdue task of even-handed dialogue - or contemporary comparative philosophy - we will be served well by looking at Nietzsche’s mistakes, which in turn informed the tragic critic of the West of the last century, Martin Heidegger. We may learn here not to cast others in one’s own troubled image; and not to reverse cultural icons: *Europe’s* Superman, and *Asia’s Buddha*.

Keywords Nietzsche · Asian philosophy · Indian religious thought · Buddhism · Heidegger · Comparative limits

PART I Nietzsche’s Connections with Asian Thought

Metaphorically speaking, Nietzsche reached the East on the eve of his mental collapse,¹ long before his thoughts traveled far and deep into the intellectual terrain of the West.² This happened against the background of a studious interest that

¹Parkes (1991) p. 5: ‘Essays on Nietzsche began to appear in periodicals in Japan while he was still alive, during the last decade of the 19th century. Raphael von Koeber, who taught philosophy at the Imperial University of Tokyo, began to talk about Nietzsche in his lectures there during the mid-1890s, and in 1897 the head of the philosophy department there, Inoue Tetsujiro, bought an edition of Nietzsche’s complete works in Germany and, on his return to Japan, introduced some of the German philosopher’s ideas to his students.’ Furthermore, ‘In 1898, an article appeared in one of the leading literary journals which presented Nietzsche’s ideas as a challenge to stimulate Japanese Buddhism to engage in philosophical reflection on its foundation.’ p. 5. See also Chap. 11 in Parkes *ibid*: Graham Parkes ‘The Early Reception of Nietzsche’s Philosophy in Japan,’ pp. 177–199.

²As Parkes, *ibid*, p. 5, notes, some parts of this terrain specifically resisted the reception of Nietzsche’s thought, e.g., his works were banned in Russia from the time of the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*.

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Japanese philosophers had developed in German idealism, paying special attention to Kant and Scheler. Nietzsche captured their imaginations in other ways, particularly since this latter-day German thinker appeared to be familiar with (and was making profound comments on) Buddhism vis-à-vis Western traditional morality and spirituality. This tangential connection between Nietzsche's work and Japanese philosophers was to impact the path philosophy was beginning to take as Japan entered modernity in the post-Meiji revolution.

This episode, however, cannot be recounted without mentioning a few ironies, at least in one reading of the Nietzschean connection (which will be questioned later on), viz.: the traffic for a large part was one-way, i.e., Nietzsche's thought influenced Japanese and other East-Asian thinkers more than their thinking influenced Nietzsche (if he was at all aware of current intellectual trends in Japan); the only Asian tradition that did have a significant influence upon Nietzsche was actually Indian philosophy; the Buddhist ideas Nietzsche made references to came from early Indian or South Asian sources, via Schopenhauer, and not from Japanese or Chinese sources; they were derived, it appears, from early pre-Mahāyāna or later Theravāda sources and Mahāyāna schools such as Zen. He was far more disparaging of the 'weak and debauched' Buddhism than he was open to the 'ego-less' asceticism of 'Brahmanism' (i.e., of the *Vedānta*); and Indian thinkers never took Nietzsche seriously as they did, say, Kant and Marx, until perhaps only very recently with the emergence of post-colonial critical theorizing, via Heidegger and Derrida (J.L. Mehta, J.N. Mohanty, and Gayatri Spivak come to mind). The scenario here, by contrast, in many important respects bespeaks a very different kind of connection to the one Heidegger is said to have had with Asian thought.³ J.L. Mehta, who was among the first to bring Heidegger to the English-reading world,⁴ castigates Heidegger for paying scant attention to Asian traditions in the long track established by philosophers of the German tradition.⁵

German philosophers had all been affected in one way or another by the Romantics' reaching out to the Orient,⁶ or as in Hegel, of the Rationalists' quest for the imperfect manifestations of a common reason (*Vernunft/Aufhebung*) in all humanity.⁷ Hegel was forever wrestling with the Orient, especially in his *History of Philosophy*, and *Philosophy of History*, and he wrote a book-length review of Wilhelm van Humboldt's treatise on the *Bhagavad Gita*.⁸ Philosophers such as Schelling,⁹ Max Scheler, and even Kant, had some inkling about Indian philosophy.

³ See Mehta (1987). Heidegger dismissed Indian philosophy from his main concerns on the basis that it did not provide a radical departure from Western thinking but was in fact part of the same exploration of Being carried to its fulfilment in Greek thought. He thus looked further east to China (and especially Japan) for a way of thinking founded on completely different grounds.

⁴ J. L. Mehta *The Philosophy of Heidegger* (Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, 1967 [a rare copy I personally rescued from the BHU's derelict storeroom in 1991], Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1971). Issued as *Martin Heidegger: The Way and the Vision*, University Press of Hawaii, Honolulu, 1976.

⁵ J.L. Mehta in Parkes (1987) op cit., pp. 24–27, p. 8 *passim*; see also, Jackson (1992), pp. 3–7, p. 184.

⁶ For background, consult Sedlar (1982) Chaps. 1–2, Dalmia (2003); Balagangadharan (2005). P. Bilimoria, *A Report on Indologism*, AAR, Boston, November 1999 (unpublished manuscript).

⁷ Schulin (1958). W. Halbfass (1988).

⁸ See French version of this essay in M. Hulin (1979)

⁹ Sedlar op cit. pp. 42–45

Schelling was preoccupied with the *Upanishads*, as was Schopenhauer,¹⁰ who confidently proclaimed that 'Indian wisdom is flowing back into Europe and it will produce a fundamental change in our knowing and thinking'.¹¹ He was Nietzsche's 'educator' in an important sense, as we shall see. But Nietzsche steps back and says, along with Hegel, that it was time the West tied the Gordian knot again, regained its Greek integrity, and dispelled the magic of the East—a prejudice well-rehearsed since in Western/modern academic philosophy and 'high-theory' disciplines.¹² Despite Nietzsche's admonishing judgment of the Western tryst with "the sublime metaphysical illusion" since the *theoretic* days of Socrates, he seems to have been one of those early Western thinkers who nevertheless felt that certain dangers lay in wait for those who made the detour away from the safe harbour of their own way of thinking, from their own cultural-intellectual roots.¹³ Freud and Husserl were not far from this thinking themselves. Heidegger seems to have taken this message to heart in his attempt to think the Greek 'more Greek', transcend the Greek *through* Greek, and to find a new way out of the destiny of nihilism that emerged out of the Greek beginnings. Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, Derrida, and Rorty likewise ignored the East. Heidegger, to his credit, towards the closing years of his life, did turn his attention a little more towards the non-Western world, but this was because he feared the menace of the inexorable 'Europeanization of the earth' (an adage borrowed from Husserl in a different context) and the consequences of the annihilating power of technology and of a desacralized modernity which countries like Japan had lately entered. But that stilted dialogue is another story that I have sketched elsewhere.¹⁴ Still, I have come to realize that that story is not complete without appreciating the important background that prefigures in Nietzsche's relationship to the East.

Some Questions: Europe's Buddha

It appears that Nietzsche came upon Indian epic literature while still in high school¹⁵ and he later read Deussen's German translations of *Upanishads* as well Schopenhauer's writings on Buddhism; but his evaluation of Buddhism as 'nihilistic' and 'spiritually enervating' grew in proportion to his rejection of Schopenhauer's pessimism. Nietzsche was no scholar of Indian thought and, although a keen philologist himself, he appeared to have paid little attention to philological work being done in his days on Indian texts.

¹⁰ Ibid pp. 45–49

¹¹ Schopenhauer (1999), pp. 312–315. See also, Mehta (1990), p. 51.

¹² Nietzsche (1967), pp. 18–19; also Junger (1953). See, J.L. Mehta, in Jackson (ed) *J L Mehta on Heidegger*, op cit, p. 258.

¹³ See *The Birth of Tragedy*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (Modern Library, N Y, 1968, pp. 93–95). Jung was later to voice very similar concerns in view of the 20th-century interest in Eastern religions and a subsequent loss in belief in Western intellectual achievement.

¹⁴ See Bilimoria (2001).

¹⁵ Figl 1991 p. 52: 'Again, in the context of the question of fate Nietzsche comes to speak of two basic documents on Indian literature and religion, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. These two epics are mentioned in a draft Nietzsche made of an essay for school dated December 8, 1862 (BAW 2, 445 Nachbericht)'. Figl's essay deals primarily with this early period of Nietzsche's encounters with Asian thought—his 'high school' years at Pforta (1854–64) as well as his years at the University of Bonn (1864–65).

Puzzling indeed for one who professes to speak through the mouth of the Persian Zarathustra and introduces his *On the Genealogy of Morals* with Buddhist and Vedānta statements that purport going ‘beyond good and evil’. The questions then arise: Who is Zarathustra? What did Nietzsche mean by pronouncing that he could be ‘Europe’s Buddha’? What prompted Nietzsche’s excursions into Asia, and how serious was his interest in Asian thought? What did Nietzsche understand of Brahmanical and Buddhist spiritualities? What prompted him to borrow or appropriate from these traditions, and did he do it at all well?

Three schools of thought have arisen in Nietzschean scholarship on the precise link between Nietzsche and Asian thought. One such school is represented in the anthology edited by Graham Parkes,¹⁶ which indicates that Nietzsche did not pay serious attention to Asian thought (and hence the misrepresentations), although Nietzsche, as we mentioned earlier, had an impact on Asian thinking up to modern times.¹⁷ Hence the traffic was one-way.

The second school is represented in the solitary work by Freny Mistry, *Nietzsche and Buddhism*.¹⁸ To be sure, Mistry is also interested in drawing a convergence between the original spirit of Buddha’s teachings and Nietzsche’s enquiry. But Mistry is more positive on the questions in regard to the actual linkages between the two and she attempts to demonstrate extensively, through a detailed research of documents, against the background of an earlier charge, of a seemingly philistine treatment of Buddhism, laid by a Swiss scholar, Max Ladner.¹⁹ Mistry underscores the positive influence that Asian thought had on Nietzsche’s philosophy, especially in light of the new direction he sought to give to Western intellectual culture (even though Asian thinking, especially Buddhism and Vedānta, was not able to save him from his own tragic mental collapse).

On the other hand, in a more recent study of Nietzsche’s connections with Buddhism by Robert G. Morrison,²⁰ there is a more circumspect (indeed as the subtitle suggests, an ironically nuanced approach) in which the author argues that Nietzsche looked at Buddhism to find an anchor for his thesis of the ‘physiological origins’ of religion that would supersede the prevailing ‘transcendental ones’. So to that end, the arch-nihilist discerns a heavy dependence in the spread of Buddhism ‘on the exclusive reliance of the Indians on rice, which led to a general loss of vigor’.²¹ But I am moving ahead of the background narrative to Nietzsche’s discovery of Indic and Buddhist texts that is apposite right now.

Nietzsche’s Interest in India

As I remarked earlier, Nietzsche first encountered Indian texts in his high school days and refers in his notebooks to Hindu adages about fate. This interest grew

¹⁶ See note 1 above.

¹⁷ This discussion, with a concern for delineating parallels between Nietzschean thinking and later Buddhism, becomes the main focus of the Parkes anthology *Nietzsche and Asian Thought*

¹⁸ Mistry (1981).

¹⁹ Max Ladner *Nietzsche und der Buddhismus* (Zurich, 1933). Mistry’s introduction is concerned primarily with a critical assessment of this earlier monograph on Nietzsche and Buddhism by Ladner.

²⁰ Morrison (1997). See Chapters 2 and 7 in particular.

²¹ Ibid, p 27, n109, citing Nietzsche from *The Gay Science* 134.

rapidly, especially with the circulation of Paul Deussen's German translations of *Upanishads* as well as Schopenhauer's writings on early Buddhism. Nietzsche read Deussen's²² *Die Elemente der Metaphysik* and *Das System der Vedānta*, and speaks eloquently of his debts to Deussen, although it now appears that their closeness was not maintained. His rejection of Buddhism grew with his repugnance for Schopenhauer's pessimism, and this may well have adversely influenced his own reading of Buddhism.²³ Nevertheless, these excursions into Indian texts demonstrate that Nietzsche actually knew somewhat more about Indian philosophy than is commonly acknowledged, and for which he was of course indebted to a close circle of friends who were involved in Sanskrit studies on Vedānta, besides Deussen, for Nietzsche even makes references to '*Sankhya*' '*Sāṃkhya*' (which was not Deussen's cup of *soma*). While it is true, as Mistry and others point out, that there was a paucity of first-hand material, Nietzsche did care to scour through whatever material he could find. For instance on Buddhism, there is some evidence that he was familiar with the *Nikāya*-s of the Theravāda tradition, and that besides Oldenberg's books on Buddhism,²⁴ he did consult the works of Ernest Windisch, a contemporary Buddhologist: 'His recurrent allusions to the Buddhist perspective of *ānatta* [no-self] as relevant to his own rejection of metaphysical idealism intimate his personal awareness of an affiliated intellectual response to phenomenal experience.'²⁵

Indeed, it was Nietzsche who brought to focus the *ānatta* or 'no-soul' doctrine of Buddhism, and in this way was helping to rectify the false impression that Schopenhauer had created of Buddhist philosophy. However, this did not stop Nietzsche from identifying metaphysical negation with the 'negativity' or what he took to be the nihilistic tendencies in Schopenhauer's thinking. But Nietzsche was certainly ironical about the uncritical and falsely interpreted way in which Indian philosophy was being imported to the West.

Western Decadence

The trenchant critique and judgment upon the 'paganism' of Christianity and the 'decadence' of Western rationality since the days of Plato had a great deal to do with the persistence of Indic themes in Nietzsche's writings. The supposedly 'intellectual spirituality' of Indian thought seemed to provide a contrasting background and a 'foreign vantage-point' from which to challenge the actual route the West had taken. Critics of Orientalism have branded this particular approach as 'tradition-in-use', i.e., a largely instrumental interest in furthering one's own perspective or ideology

²² Paul Deussen *Die Elemente der Metaphysik* (Aachen, 1877) and *Das System des Vedānta* (Leipzig, 1883). See Mistry p.16.

²³ Archivists have found to their dismay that volumes of bound works on Indian thought and literature (some sent by Deussen) remained unopened on Nietzsche's dusty bookshelves, reinforcing the suspicion, in some circles, that Nietzsche fabricated many of his references to Hindu and Buddhist ideas simply by looking at the cover of the texts sent to him; the cryptic use of the name of 'Zarathustra' may well have had its origins through such a casual encounter, or 'one-night book stand'. See Mistry's bibliography for a selection of titles of interest found on Nietzsche's own bookshelves.

²⁴ Herman Oldenberg *Buddha. Sein Leben, seine Lehre, seine Gemeinde* (Berlin, 1881) See Mistry p. 16

²⁵ Mistry op. cit. p. 10

through the appropriation and incorporation of materials of a foreign origin. Did Nietzsche stop to ask whether his prejudices in respect of Indian thought (both excessively positive and at times ignorantly negative) affected the way he judged and ridiculed Western thought?

Perspectivism

As is well known, Nietzsche developed with great force a philosophy to which the concept of 'will to power' is central and he tried to dispel much ignorance overshadowing Western intellectualism by subverting certain of the essential presuppositions underpinning its metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. Nietzsche could glimpse what was really going on beneath the surface of human history—not a world unifying in a universal rationality—but rather, alienation, brokenness, loss of meaning, and binding measure, the death of God, a dark night descending on humankind, a time of dire need and utter forsakenness. In his anti-theistic phases he espoused theories of 'eternal return', the transcendence of good and evil, *anti-ressentiment*, and the rule of the Superman.

One finds that in his discussions of these doctrines Nietzsche invariably makes references to Asian perspectives against which he compares or evaluates the particular Western 'truth' he is set on demolishing (indeed, the strategy of *destruktion/deconstruction* which Heidegger and Derrida have recognized in Nietzsche's works). Perspectivism is defined as 'the "estranging" of what is one's own by questioning from behind (*hinterfragen*), from the perspective of the foreign.'²⁶ Perspectivism also underscores a plurality of perspectives, without slippage into the 'childish' banality of relativism.²⁷ This perspectivism is an important device by which Nietzsche places himself in the 'boots' of the cultural Other in the hope that the distance from his own entrenched situation might make visible the unconscious and concealed structures, prejudices, and weaknesses of his own culture. Nietzsche had no desire to 'go foreign' or adopt Asiatic ways, but sought instead to use Asian experiences as counter-images, and as deconstructive tropes, against which he could comfortably pass censor on many features of Judaism, Christianity, and in his eyes, an equally decadent Western secularism.

Without questioning one's own culture from some perspective that transcends its own limited horizons, how else can one go about unleashing the concealed torrents of the culture? This countervailing interest prefigures in large measure Nietzsche's reading of Asian texts. If, for example, he desires to attack Christianity's preoccupation with guilt, sin, evil, and the painful attitude to earthly existence, or *ressentiment*, he might not find a faithful ally in the Buddha, whose psychological melancholia, more than a philosophical insight, leads him to pivot his four noble truths on suffering and suffering alone.²⁸ Why would man want suffering? Or rather,

²⁶ Eberhard Scheffele 'Questioning One's "Own" from the Perspective of the Foreign', translated by Graham Parkes pp. 31–47 in Parkes op.cit. p. 32, italics omitted from original.

²⁷ Solomon (1988) p. 9

²⁸ Mistry op. cit. p. 5 n. 7 with reference to Aphorism 27 in Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morals*

why does the human race moralize suffering by holding someone or something else responsible for it? Why is suffering thought of as an effect of a moral cause or predicament?²⁹ Why this *ressentiment*? But all these negative traces that history and humanity have wilfully—or out of a ‘tremendous collapse and *disease of the will*’, conspired to bequeath to the individual must be overcome. And Nietzsche recognizes this sanguine strategy in the Buddha’s life and message that places emphasis on confronting and tackling conventional life from within its own resources rather than, as in the Brahmanical tradition, taking the escape route to the supernatural. But this acknowledgement is also tempered with a healthy irony and a sense of despair over Buddhism’s liberative trajectory at the end of the journey. As Morrison explains poignantly in this insightful passage:

Nietzsche goes on to say that the Buddha counteracts the harm done to the ‘personal instinct,’ the ‘loss of centre of gravity’, by redirecting ‘the spiritual interest back to the individual *person*’, thereby making ‘egoism... a duty: the “one thing needful”, the “how can *you* get rid of suffering” regulates... the entire spiritual diet’. The Buddha warns against such harmful affects as: ‘the feeling of revengefulness, of antipathy, of *ressentiment*’, because such emotions are ‘thoroughly *unhealthy*’: they make the body sick. The Buddha, as Nietzsche sees it, replaces old morality with physiology: this ‘is *not* morality that speaks thus, it is physiology that speaks thus.’ Hence Nietzsche credits the Buddha with insight that there are only natural causes and origins, ‘there are no supernatural causes or origins, there are no supernatural causes or origins, nor a morality based on them. The Buddha’s knowledge is not by way of some ‘revelation’, but comes from an insight into the natural order of things... [However] what the Buddha would have regarded as physiological reaches into what Nietzsche and science—and other religions—would regard as the supernatural’.³⁰

And Nietzsche suspected as much, as he read more about Buddhism and gleaned from the overly optimistic works of German idealists and philologists, in particular Schopenhauer and Oldenberg, who seem to have been mired in the metaphysical and other-worldly reaches of Buddhism.

Ambivalent Attitude toward Buddhism (Nietzsche’s Psychology)

Hence, there is a profound and troubling ambivalence or equivocation in Nietzsche’s attitude towards Buddhism, on the issue of conventional versus transcendental reality;

²⁹ A.C. Danto ‘Some Remarks on *The Genealogy of Morals*’ pp. 13–28 in Solomon and Higgins (1998) p. 23. Danto’s comments provide a useful insight into the meaning behind Nietzsche’s idea of *ressentiment*: ‘For what *ressentiment*, which is only distantly connected to the English word *resentment*, amounts to is a certain sort of interpretative explanation of suffering in the mind of the sufferer...Sufferers tend to moralize suffering by holding someone or something responsible for it: as though mere suffering, undeserved only in the sense that it makes no sense to speak of it as deserved, is simply unintelligible.’ pp. 22–23

³⁰ op cit, pp. 97–99. Nietzsche’s citations are from *Ecco Homo*, and the source of which is probably Oldenberg.

on the question of the foundations of morality in Buddhism, and on the liberative process. Nietzsche appropriates what he sees as virtues and vices in Buddhism, but for different ends. The virtues, as Scheiffle has argued, ‘serve as a “backdrop” against which he sets into relief the features of Christianity which he condemns’;³¹ the apparent vices are put up as props to help set aside the glories of Asia so that the West can get on with the job of recalling or retracing the promises lost since its Greek origins. Nietzsche, cunning and dogmatic as he is, remains faithful to his perspectivism and open to new horizons, ideas and styles, and for some overdue movement in a stagnant intellectual domain. The ambivalence that characterizes Nietzsche’s references to Buddhism is poignantly outlined in the following passage from Mistry’s introduction³² (somewhat lengthy but worthwhile). Buddhism, Nietzsche avers,

is passively and destructively pessimistic, nihilistic, and decadent. It represents a denial of the natural desires of man and thrives among the inert, weak, and exhausted individuals. It is absented of vigor and exuberance and opposed to what is strong, well-constituted, healthy, and exceptional. It is unattractive to “active” and “youthful” men. It represents a fear of and oversensitivity to pain and corruption. It encourages the emotions of guilt and responsibility lodged in the “bad” conscience. It detests evil because evil paves the way to such painful conditions as unrest, work, care, complications, and dependence. Its lack of resentment owes to a basic debility that views all emotional impulses with horror. It advocates the “pity” that persuades man to “nothingness”. It demonstrates a “malady of the will”, upholding as it does, the will to nonentity, against the will to “power”. It is a religion for “late” men who have reached the end of life. Its “docility” resembles that of the “perfect cow”.

This characterization, or what to a devout Buddhist would be a caricature, raises one urgent question: could he not be describing Christianity, at least in his own understanding? In other words, has Nietzsche callously projected his prejudices against and misconceptions about Christianity, without due qualification:

Conversely, Nietzsche informs that the “self-deception of moral concepts” lies far behind Buddhism. It is “beyond good and evil”, and a hundred times more realistic than Christianity. It encounters problems objectively, coolly and truthfully. It is the only genuinely “positivistic” religion in history, strictly “phenomenalistic” and pragmatic in its outlook. It bears a deference for reality and so rules out the paralyzing threat of sin. It prescribes hygienic measures to overcome depressing physiological conditions and is intended to preserve mental health. It counteracts dejection, counsels moderation, the wariness of all intoxicants as also of all emotions that activate the gall-bladder and heat the blood. It is opposed to worry. It develops ideas which are soothing and encouraging. The Buddha is a “physiologist” par excellence and his religion a “system of hygiene”. He understands goodness and graciousness as health-promoting. He rules out prayer and extreme asceticism and does not advocate subscription to imperatives or compulsions of any sort. He bans hostility and

³¹ Eberhard Scheiffle op. cit. p. 42

³² Mistry p.7, includes reference to *Will to Power* p. 580

strife with those who think otherwise. He insists upon the overcoming of revenge, antipathy, ill-will. In opposition to outer action, Buddhism stresses inner strenuousness and vigilance. It professes a healthy "egoism" in the Socratic sense and fights with a rigorous attempt to lead the most spiritual interests back to the person...It possesses lofty intellectual love...Buddhism [in short] represents the "simple and loving practical life—a happiness attainable on earth".³³

Glowing praises, but much here is condescending and indicates a failure to appraise Buddhism in terms other than its meekness, cheerful outlook on reality, and a therapeutic constancy. Consistent with this ambivalence, Nietzsche goes on to adulate, in Mistry's words, 'the Buddhist denial of substance or soul (*ānatta*) and its attendant culture of a spiritual self-sufficiency, now criticizes what he errantly conceives to be the Buddhist aim: the "escape" from suffering, alternatively, the desire for non-existence (*nirvāṇa*). The Buddhist ostensibly rescues himself from spiritual exhaustion caused by blind faith (presumably of Brahmanic ritualists) in the substantial reality, only to succumb to another form of enervating nihilism represented by the will to "non-existence". The spiritual move in Buddhism is not, Nietzsche mistakenly intimates, away from a static metaphysical bias to a dynamic ethic; its climax reveals the vicious circle of nothingness'.³⁴ Or in Nietzsche's own words: 'In the teaching of Buddha, egoism becomes a duty: the "one thing needful," the "how can you get rid of suffering?" regulates and circumscribes the entire spiritual diet'.³⁵

³³ Ibid p. 7

³⁴ Mistry ibid p. 7, the Full text that Mistry is citing from is in *Twilight of the Idols The Anti-Christ*, p. 129: 'With my condemnation of Christianity, I should not like to have wronged a kindred religion which even preponderates in the number of its believers: *Buddhism*. They belong together as nihilistic religions – they are *decadence* religions – but they are distinguished from one another in the most remarkable way. The critic of Christianity is profoundly grateful to Indian scholars that one is now able to *compare* these two religions. – Buddhism is a hundred times more realistic than Christianity – it has a heritage of a cool and objective profoundly from Christianity – the self-deception of moral concepts behind it – it stands, in any language, *beyond* good and evil. – The *two* physiological facts upon which it rests and on which it fixes its eyes are: *firstly* an excessive excitability of sensibility which expresses itself as a refined capacity for pain, *then* an over-intellectuality, a too great preoccupation with concepts and logical procedures under which the personal instinct has sustained harm to the advantage of the "impersonal" ... On the basis of these physiological condition a state of *depression* has arisen: against these depression Buddhism takes hygienic measures.' He goes on to list seemingly approvingly a quasi-stoical practices and mechanism of self-control towards the emergence of a healthy *person, individual, egoism*, and ends this reportage with this remarkable judgment: 'In the teachings of Buddha egoism becomes a duty: the "one thing needful", the "how *you* can get rid of suffering" regulates and circumscribes the entire spiritual diet' – much like Socrates elevation of personal egoism to morality. p 130. posing of problems in its composition, it arrives *after* a philosophical movement lasting hundreds of years; the concept 'God' is already abolished by the time it arrives. Buddhism is the only *positivistic* religion history has to show us, even in its epistemology (a strict phenomenism -), it no longer speaks of "the struggle against *sin*" but, quite in accordance with actuality, "the struggle against *suffering*". It already has – and this distinguishes it includes reference to *Will to Power* p. 580

³⁵ Nietzsche *The Antichrist* p. 20 quoted in M. Hulin 'Nietzsche and the Suffering of the Indian Ascetic' pp. 64–75 in Parkes (1991) op cit p. 71

Jesus and Buddha: Symbols and History

But on the other hand, in making this glowing appraisal, Nietzsche could curiously be writing an eulogy to Jesus: is this again another, albeit, more sanguine projection, of ‘the psychological type of the Redeemer’³⁶ onto the robust, pragmatic and ever-healthy warrior-prince, Siddhartha Gautama, in his earthly days? My deliberate invocation of Jesus in this context is intended to underscore a serious response to what Nietzsche thought Christianity could be, or could have been, minus the historical distortions. Jesus, Nietzsche considers, was a “‘foreign figure” in a milieu that *coarsened* a particular “type” that ‘finds blessedness, (pleasure) only in no longer offering any resistance to anybody, neither to evil nor to him who is evil—love as the only, the last possible way of life.’³⁷ But ‘in order to be able to understand anything of it, the first disciples, in particular, first translated into their own crudity an existence which was wholly embedded in symbols and incomprehensibilities.’³⁸ ‘Meanwhile’, Nietzsche remarks, ‘there is a gaping contradiction between the sermonizer on the mount, lake, and meadow, whose appearance seems like that of a Buddha on soil that is not at all Indian, and that fanatic of aggression, that mortal enemy of theologians and priests... To repeat, I am against any attempt to introduce the fanatic into the Redeemer type,’³⁹ which was done by Jesus’ followers. But then this has been ‘the history of Christianity... the history of misunderstanding, growing cruder with every step, of an original symbolism.’⁴⁰

That symbolism in this model (recall the image of the Buddha) undergirds the idea of living, or dying, so as to redeem oneself, not for others, indeed before others. ‘It was the *way* Jesus lived and died that is significant,’ and that ‘way of life is “Not a faith, but a doing.”’⁴¹ And redemption then becomes ‘a state of the heart... a change of heart in the individual.’⁴² Therefore, the genuine Christian way of life is also the most private form of existence: ‘Christianity is possible as the *most private* form of existence. It presupposes a narrow, withdrawn, completely apolitical society—it belongs to the convent.’⁴³ It is this apolitical, not truly other-regarding, and egoistic way that Nietzsche finds contradictory in Jesus, whom he therefore sets aside as Decadence of a ‘neurotic epileptic, visionary...’⁴⁴

³⁶ Ronald A. Carson ‘Nietzsche’s Jesus’ pp. 39–52 in *Cross Currents* Winter 1971. p. 39

³⁷ Ibid p. 40, Nietzsche II, 1191. All quotations from Nietzsche are from *Friedrich Nietzsche: Werke in drei Bänden*, ed. Karl Schlechtha (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1954–56), vols. II–III

³⁸ Ibid. p. 40, Nietzsche II, 1192–93

³⁹ Ibid. pp. 40–41, Nietzsche II, 1192–93

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 41, Nietzsche II, 1198

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 49, Nietzsche II, 1200

⁴² Ibid. p. 49, Nietzsche II, 643

⁴³ Ibid. p. 46, Nietzsche III, 588

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 49, Nietzsche III, 641

whose saintly commandment "resist no evil" amounts to the inability for resistance.⁴⁵

Despite this final rejection, one might argue that Nietzsche is not altogether averse to the symbolism of Jesus, even of the cross; but insofar as Christianity can be a private pursuit, it is more or less harmless; the historical and institutionalized Christianity, however, is what he holds in part responsible for the dimming of the twilights of the gods and the emergence of Western nihilism. In a not dissimilar vein, the argument here is that Nietzsche's fledgling philosophy of religion leads him to view the Buddha and his outward impact in the same light. The historical Buddha, whose way of life is a fit model for the overcoming of self, rather than a terminal denial or suppression of the self, whose teachings are reducible to the principle of love, with a passion for life, pitted against ritualism, and who recognizes the essential mutuality between man and man, is one that Europe could well, indeed must, embrace. Such a one, I get the strange feeling, is synthesized in the image of Zarathustra, a curious blend of the Indo-Aryan and the Semite, the ultimate in world civilizations, whose traces are left only in archaeological remains.⁴⁶ And when Nietzsche breaks into the first person, he identifies totally with this new prophet, who he styles elsewhere as 'Europe's Buddha'.⁴⁷ Again, as Mistry notes: 'It is essentially in opposition to Christianity that Nietzsche appreciates Buddhism, though paradoxically, and for the most part, he polemises [sic] against both religions conjunctly.'⁴⁸ This comment leads us to suspect that Nietzsche was not so much

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 49. Nietzsche II, 1191; What Nietzsche says about Manu is instructive here. This is an instance of Nietzsche trying his hands at crude historical anthropology to reinforce his speculative views on hierarchical divisions, in the context of the Master/Slave narrative that made virtues out of qualities that were in his eyes largely negative values, namely, meekness, humility, self-denial, modesty, pity and compassion. In the *Nachlass*, a whole chapter is devoted to Manu ('On the criticism of the Law Book of Manu'). See also Joan Stambaugh *Untersuchungen zum Problem der Zeit bei Nietzsche* (Den Haag, 1959) p. 180), and in *Twilight of the Idols* he discusses Manu in the context of the idea of a master race which the Indians foresaw far better even than Christian patriarchs with their roots in Jewish religion. His praise for Manu is unqualified; never again do we see unreserved approbation for any Indian or Asian ideas in Nietzsche. Christianity is characterized as the triumph of the Chandala, or slave values, the undying Chandala revenge as the religion of love, whereas *The Laws of Manu* are to him 'an incomparably spiritual and superior work' because Manu, he thought, arrested once and for all the possibility of a slave rebellion. 'Nietzsche seized on it as a happy and unexpected confirmation of an aspect of his own thinking. It was the radical hierarchy of human worth that aroused his enthusiasm; one has to admire Nietzsche's sensitive "nose" when he says, "Plato reads like one who had been well instructed by a Brahmin."' (Mistry op. cit.) p. 13, n. 13). Nietzsche did not realize that Manu probably had as much impact on the historical organization of the Indian society as Plato has had on the West. Manu's prescriptivism has been often challenged and checked by any number of social thinkers, activists, reformists, from the intoxicated Bhakta, or devotional bards, to Gandhi nearer our time. The very values that Nietzsche ascribes to the slaves (in the inversion of their envy) are also the values that are central to Brahmanical priests. It is odd of him to think that all hierarchies everywhere share the same basic Master values—his own perspectivism should have alerted him to the relativity of this ethical truth at least.

⁴⁶ See Higgins, op. cit.

⁴⁷ This phrase comes from Nietzsche's *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, Juli 1882 bis Winter 1883–1884, written from November 1882 to February 1883.

⁴⁸ op. cit. p. 43

concerned with a comparative investigation as such, pitting one faith against another, but was rather invoking (and no doubt provoking) the great faiths in the course of a search for his own fate, a search which leads to the *Übermensch*, and the metaphorical term, 'Europe's Buddha' carries traces of the destinies through which he passed in his tortuous conception.

Rebirth and Eternal Return

I want finally to examine Nietzsche's dalliances with the Indian conceptions of rebirth, which is reincarnated in some muted form in the doctrine of eternal recurrence⁴⁹ as an antidote to the linear conception of time and the notion of a permanent life hereafter, as is held in both Judaism and Christianity. The doctrine, which is a major theme of the masterwork *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, holds that the entire flux of life is a causal nexus which cyclically repeats itself over and over again.⁵⁰ This doctrine would appear to combine two central insights of the Buddha, namely, that all things are fundamentally impermanent, and that they are co-originatively dependent (*pratītya-samutpadā*). Schopenhauer was well aware of these principles, which indeed abetted his fatalistic pessimism. These principles also entail that rebirth does not require the existence of a transmigratory substance or soul (accepted by Hindus but rejected by Buddhists). A 'no-self' transmigrating sounds like a contradiction in terms, which is probably why Nietzsche rejected the notion of rebirth itself but salvaged, it seems, the principles underpinning this belief. There is at least some convergence between the two doctrines.

Joan Stambaugh⁵¹ in her work on Nietzsche's thought on eternal return, simply notes the parallels between Nietzsche and the Buddha, particularly on issues such as: 'The denial of substance, of the soul, of the universal, and of duration; an emphasis on suffering in the sense of ontological restlessness, on the absolute order of the world, ("causality": not in the sense of efficient cause or even of the other Aristotelian causes, but in the sense of co-dependently originated, of things arising together, of the absolute momentariness of the Will to Power)'...and we might add: Death of God.

But I want to ask whether there is here more than simply the noted affinity between the two enemies of metaphysical absolutism. Stretching the notion of *Samsāra* (the world in perpetual flux) and coupling it with the autonomous functioning of *karma* that leads to the postulate of rebirth, in the absence of a benevolent and redeeming supreme deity, it is not difficult to see how one could logically derive a thesis resembling the endless turning of a revolving wheel, which

⁴⁹ At least one author has explored the Indian connection in respect of Nietzsche's conception of eternal recurrence: D. Bannerjee 'The Indian origin of Nietzsche's theory of Eternal Return' *German Life and Letters* VII (April, 1954) pp. 161–169 mentioned in Mistry p. 146, n. 14 Bannerjee (p. 163) argues that Nietzsche 'fully accepted the doctrine of reincarnation and the theory of the Kalpas (the periodic appearance and reincarnation of worlds) deriving from Hinduism and propounded by Schopenhauer in his book, *The World as Will and Imagination*.' (Mistry, op cit, p. 146, n. 14)

⁵⁰ Kathleen Higgins 'Reading Zarathustra' pp. 132–151 in Solomon and Higgins op. cit. p. 144

⁵¹ Stambaugh (1972) p. 18

returns, for any point marked on the wheel, at the end of each cycle to the same spot; if the wheel is set in motion on a plane surface, like a cart-wheel, the point marked returns to the same spot but a little further ahead, creating a spiral effect. Nietzsche, it seems, was attracted by the Buddha's idea of the recurrence suggested in the Buddhist image of *Samsāra*, the wheel of life and death. Nevertheless, he felt that the Buddhist wheel was somewhat stagnant—a wheel that did not move by the force of its own will, but by the force of habit, past experiences, and a somnambulant culture. Furthermore, the Buddhist thought it wiser to opt out, or jump off the revolving wheel and plunge into the deep abyss of *nirvāṇa*, the ultimate escape route of nihilism.

The ingredient that was absent, for Nietzsche, in this noble imagery was the presence of a healthier ego than the one the Buddha had suggested; not an ego that dies to the world, but one that overcomes itself and awakens to the world, to the possibilities ahead, to the future horizon of humanity. This thrusting forth requires energy, action, creative endurance,⁵² and continual self-surmounting within the present reality, and so ultimately the 'will to power'. It is the alteration or alternation rather of this critical opportunity that Nietzsche builds as a positive force into his praxis; while Buddha moves from the alteration to put an end to the creative endurance in *nirvāṇa*.

However, perhaps Nietzsche exaggerated the difference to claim uniqueness for his own ethical psychology, while drawing generously on Buddha's discipline, which is anchored firmly in empirical reality, in mutuality, is unaided by supernatural powers, and stems ultimately from the indomitable human capacity to continue the journey after the passing of each night's darkness. This is consistent with Nietzsche's tragic view of individuality in *The Birth of Tragedy*, suggesting that meaning in individual life depends on one's ability to see beyond a perspective that is preoccupied with one's own well-being and satisfaction.

Of course, it satisfies his criticism of Christianity's linear model of time, which effectively makes us wait for eternity to be rewarded or punished; meanwhile the self caves into an icy state of incorporeal somnambulance, awaiting God's intervening hand.

Whereas the cyclical aspect of the doctrine gives every moment equal prominence, it also allows for an active response rather than simply reacting to the burden of the past. And it especially this latter factor that Nietzsche wanted to stress.⁵³ And this activity is most life-affirming when one directs the accumulation of one's life's moments towards some definite end. Zarathustra expresses this vision of his own activity:

... I walk among men as among the fragments of the future—that future which I envisage. And this is all my creating and striving, that I create and carry together into One what is fragment and riddle and dreadful accident...

⁵² The frustration which Nietzsche felt with the ostensible passivity and 'nihilism' of Buddhism is well brought out in Chap. IV 'On suffering' of Mistry's book where Nietzsche's insistence of the existential need of suffering and the creative outcome of the experience of misfortune is highlighted. See pp. 116–123.

⁵³ Kathleen Higgins 'Reading Zarathustra' pp. 132–151 in Solomon and Higgins, op. cit. p.145

To redeem those who lived in the past and to recreate all 'it was' into a 'thus I willed it'—that alone should I call redemption.

The Buddha though does not return, once having passed through the gates of terminal nothingness, the emptiness of *taṭhagata* or *nirvāṇa*; but Zarathustra does not leave behind the legacy of *his* past achievements—he returns as the *Avatāta*. He is the fitting antipode to the slightly misguided, though noble, historical Buddha; he can redeem Asia as well; he is indeed Asia's Superman. But the Semite-Persian hails via Europe!

Asceticism and Suffering

In standard Indian understanding, suffering is an ontological fact of existence, and depending on the attitude one takes to it, suffering is believed to give rise to the yearning for *nirvāṇa*. That is the logical connection; the praxis may, as it often does, border on *via negativa* and does in the pan-Indian context entail rigid forms of asceticism, withdrawal from the world and abstinences of many kinds. This priestly asceticism, Nietzsche notes (and Richard Rorty echoes elsewhere), has infected the nobility and philosophers of the West too. But as we noted earlier, Nietzsche sees in *nirvana* an archetypical weakness of will that opts for nothingness, static *non-ens*, and this nothingness in Buddhism he associates with nihilism, the ultimate flight from life. He then argues (though without due consideration of the historical and social conditions giving rise to the historical Buddha), that it is this overwhelming desire to find an escape route that leads to the postulation of suffering (*duḥkha*) in both Buddhist and *yoga* teachings. So instead of giving men power, *nirvāṇa* actually disempowers them. One is no longer required to have the 'will to suffer'. Therefore, 'the exaggerated imposition of suffering upon suffering manifest in Indian ascetic existence and inspired by the reality of *nirvāṇa* is inseparable,' he insists, 'from the false sense of sovereignty and self-exaltation found also in "philosophic" power'.⁵⁴ 'Nietzsche remarks in the *Genealogy* that man will readily suffer if he is given a reason for his suffering. Christianity, Vedānta, and Buddhism give a sense to suffering; in all three religions suffering is activated by the promise of reward. The Brahmin realizes the need to purify himself because it is the only way of approximating the All-Soul [*Brahman*].'⁵⁵ And he usually adopts three practices common to all ascetic tendencies: fasting, solitude, and sexual abstinence. The suffering of Indian ascetics, he claims, was inspired by a megalomania. In *Genealogy* (III, 10), he informs that the 'inactive, brooding, unwarlike element—common to the nature of contemplative men—made the Indian ascetic philosopher suspicious of himself; his only release from the situation was the exercise of definite fear of himself among the populace.'⁵⁶ They mortified themselves in terrible ways in order to force down the gods and the traditions of their own soul. As exemplary of this arrogant and fear-inspiring asceticism Nietzsche cites,

⁵⁴ Mistry op. cit. p. 184

⁵⁵ *ibid.* p. 184

⁵⁶ *ibid.* p. 184

on several occasions, the case of the Brahmin king Vishvamisra who having tortured himself for thousands of years, created and lived through his own "hell" and acquired the maximum of power and confidence in himself, 'enough to build a *new heaven*.'⁵⁷ Even the gods of which the Indian dreamer dreams are cast in the image of a sadistic and masochistic divinity, who creates a suffering people and banishes himself into the life of torture in order to feel his bliss and power doubled.⁵⁸

Critique of Nietzsche's Position - Suffering: Nietzsche, Buddha, Gandhi

Now Nietzsche may be right in drawing this connection and reversing the traditionally conceived move from suffering to *nirvāṇa*, *moksha*, heaven, etc. But there is one disturbing and overly self-confident tone in Nietzsche, which I think needs questioning. He brings no historical perspective to the traditions and practices he speaks about. Early European anthropological reportage on social practices of natives, for example, Aboriginal totem-pole ritual and group dance, presented a one-dimensional picture as if the 'savages' had identified themselves with the animals they seem to be worshipping. The importance, therefore, of seeing these practices, whether they be *yoga*, *tantra*, trance, contemplation, or *theoria*, in their proper contexts and in the vastly different historical contours in which they arise cannot be overstated.

In that regard, Nietzsche was guilty of the same reliance on prescriptive texts for descriptive purposes typical of most Indology up to the present day. This discipline has traditionally opted for a textual rather than historical object of study. This has partly evolved from the nature of the academic disciplines originally involved in the 're-discovery' of India, disciplines such as philology, lexicography, textual criticism; and secondly from the lack of historical materials in the Indian context and the difficulties of historical study of Indian antiquity in general. There may have been other reasons connected with the West's creation of the East as an Other, which led to a heavy emphasis on ideal models of the Orient rather than detailed examination of existing India. This direction of study creates the oft-felt gap between the 'wonder that was India' and the perceived ingloriousness of contemporary India, a gap which often led to Orientalist disappointment and despair, and ultimate rejection of any ongoing validity in Indian progress in the fields of philosophy, literature, and so on. From an anthropological point of view this cannot but lead to a distorted and overly idealized picture of the society itself, a moral or ethical model rather than a living reality. Nevertheless, the *Dharmashāstra* tradition, of which Manu's *Laws* forms a significant part, has been of great importance in shaping the Indian *Weltanschauung*, contributing also to the epic and Purāṇic traditions, and thus affecting the popular imagination and not just that of the Brahmanic Elite.

The Buddha's compassionate response to suffering grew in a situation in which he perceived a Brahmanic tradition corrupted by privilege, weighed down by sacrifice and spiritual materialism of a sinister kind. The Brahmins, he sensed, had numbed

⁵⁷ *ibid.* p. 185 (GM III, 10; D, 12, 113; HA II, 3)

⁵⁸ *ibid.* p. 185 with reference to D, 113.

themselves against the realities of life and the needs of other groups of people among them. His sense of suffering was most likely in direct proportion to the social conditions he felt moved to respond to and to empathize with, or have compassion for. One might even say that his perception of the all-pervasiveness of suffering arises from a deeply empathic rapport with the existentialist facticity of suffering prevailing in his times, and that he generalized it to the human condition at large. Indeed, he looked within the ambience of suffering for a will, or the possibility of a movement, that would help propel the kind of action necessary for lifting one out of the pitiful state—just as someone falling in an empty well looks to the inner walls of the well in order to climb out of it. Buddha's compassionate response included the exploration of ways to escape suffering for those burdened with this human reality, whereas Nietzsche hoped to turn suffering to some positive result in the deepening, if not the betterment of character (unlike Schopenhauer who resigns to it haplessly).

Secondly, Nietzsche overlooks the tremendous cathartic force that suffering embodies. Two thousand years after the Buddha, Gandhi devised a praxis which drew heavily on the ability of the activist to suffer in the situation, to introject the violence of the adversary, and to transmute its fire through the suffering of pain which such violence portends, with the laudable expectation that peace and harmony would result. In Gandhi's hand, suffering becomes a means of empowering the will, even if by a certain stoical demeanour, to defuse the imminent violence in a situation. This praxis he called *Satyāgraha*, and it has become a powerful pro-active method of protest and rebellion for popular causes. It appears odd that Nietzsche did not acknowledge the depth of his own inner suffering, the anguish caused by the existential uncertainties that confronted him—for which, as he reminded himself, the current traditions of philosophy held no answers. Schopenhauer was more sincere in this regard, and readily acknowledged suffering as a fact of the 'philosophic' life.⁵⁹

Conclusion: Comparative Philosophy

I have not concerned myself in this discussion with the impact Nietzsche allegedly has had on contemporary Asian thought. Rather, I have explored specific arguments about the problematic nature of the way that Nietzsche took up and connected himself with Asian thought. The work of scholars such as Mistry, Parkes, Morrison, and Figl reveal that Nietzsche was perhaps more familiar with Asian thought, especially Indian, than has often been recognized, and that he did make an effort, unlike some of his predecessors and contemporaries, to become acquainted with finer points of Asian thinking, and for this he kept up a tense friendship with Deussen, Schopenhauer, and the Buddhistologist Windisch. But he did not move to a more detailed examination of the texts than was required by his own agenda which, it seems, kept intruding in this process. While not inspired by India in the way that Schopenhauer was, Nietzsche was yet enabled by the knowledge of the Orient made available by the progress in Oriental studies well underway in the mid-19th century

⁵⁹ See, Singh (2007), p. 92.

to enrich his own armory of critical tools with which to interrogate Western forms of culture and morality. Nietzsche was the recipient of Orientalist creations more than a creator of them; he made use of Orientalism without himself wishing to become an Orientalist in the stricter sense of the profession of Orientalist scholarship and interpretation.⁶⁰

Nietzsche was led to a more 'instrumentalist' involvement with the philosophies of Europe's Other, using Asian thinking to challenge Christianity and the 'decadence' of the Western intellectual tradition. It is perhaps on account of this instrumental use of Asian thinking that it did not get the attention it may have warranted, and his dismissal of Buddhism for its alleged tendency towards total nihilism created a stereotype that remained long in the Western mind (but then what does one make of Heidegger's claim that the thinking that has its beginning in Greek antiquity culminates in Nietzsche's nihilism?).

In this regard, Nietzsche was one of the early founders of 'philosophical Orientalism'. He did not proceed to become one of its systematic interpreters. So it is of little wonder that contemporary commentaries on Nietzsche have all but ignored his treatment of Asian thinking—except for Arthur Danto (who has had his own difficulties with Asian thinking); and it is only now, and on the fringes of Western philosophy, that some attention is being paid to Nietzsche's ambivalent attitude towards Asian thinking.

In a way, Nietzsche symbolizes the Western approach to Asian thinking and Asian culture in general: neglect by appropriation and swift rejection when found to be incompatible with the agenda-in-hand. But more than that, Nietzsche echoes an encoding within the grand cultural unconscious, that each of the late metaphysicians—Hegel, Heidegger, and Rorty—voiced consciously, namely, that the great beginning of Western philosophy emerges in the process of overcoming 'its extreme opposite, the mythical in general and the *Asiatic in particular*'.⁶¹ The Occident needs the Orient as both as its *kat'exochen* (beginnings) and its fallen and also estranged 'other' to mirror its own dark shadow lines and vow to correct these in its own self-image, variously through the route of reason, critique, ideology, imperial conquest, instrumental expropriation, even culturally or cosmetically—as in Orientalism—if need be. To help redress this woefully lop-sided approach and begin the long-overdue task of even-handed dialogue (or comparative philosophy) we will be well served by looking at the mistakes of Nietzsche (and of Hegel of the same era), who in turn informed the tragic critic and 'last metaphysician' of the West in the previous century, Martin Heidegger.

⁶⁰ Scheffele's analysis of the role of *hinterfragen*, 'questioning behind', for Nietzsche's hermeneutics indicates reasons why this would be so: 'The "logic" of Nietzsche's imagery makes it clear why his primary interest does not lie with *the foreign itself*, in which he adopts a standpoint: his purpose is to look back at his own situation from the perspective of the foreign.' (Scheffele p. 44 in Parkes *Nietzsche and Asian Thought*).

⁶¹ Heidegger, *Schelling* (Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1971), p. 175 (emphasis added). Heidegger is picking up on Hegel's argument: "The history of the world has an East *kat'exochen*... The history of the world travels from the East to West, for Europe, is absolutely the end of history, Asia the beginning". *The Philosophy of History* (Dover, New York, 1956), p. 103. See Mehta in Jackson (1992), p. 257. See authors paper presented at Asian and Comparative Philosophy Society Conference, Melbourne, July 2008, "Being after Heidegger: A Mehta-Mīmāṃsā rejoinder" (abstract on www.philosophy.unimelb.edu.au/asacp, click conferences).

We may learn here not to cast others in one's own troubled image, and not to reverse cultural icons: Europe can keep its Superman, and Asia its Buddha.

Acknowledgment A much earlier version of the working paper was first presented at the Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy/Australasian Association of Philosophy Annual Conference, University of Adelaide. I wish to acknowledge my profound gratitude to Guy Petterson, Marty H. Heitz, and Jay Garfield for their significant contribution toward the subsequent development of this paper for publication.

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